

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Anchorage businesses urge community to remain vigilant in COVID-19 precautions**

As community transmission of COVID-19 surges in Anchorage, members of the business community are pressing business owners, employees, and customers to follow best practices to promote public health and safety. According to the Anchorage Health Department, nearly thirty recent Anchorage-area cases of COVID-19 have presented to local businesses during the source period and/or infectious period. While specifics are still emerging, case investigations have tied COVID-19 cases to several bars and restaurants, a strip club, a large hotel, and a travel and tourism company. In these cases, masks were not worn, and physical distancing was not always adhered to.

“Everyone needs to do their part. It’s more important than ever that businesses follow recommendations from the Anchorage Health Department and the CDC to keep their employees and customers safe,” said Sarah Daulton Oates, president and CEO of CHARR. “A second industry-wide shutdown for even a short period will certainly result in the permanent closure of countless establishments. At this time, it is vital to the future of our industry and economy that business owners, employees, and their customers implement and adhere to additional preventative safety measures.”

A coalition of business leaders, including Alaska Hospitality Retailers, Anchorage Downtown Partnership, Ltd., the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce, Anchorage Economic Development Corporation, CHARR, and Visit Anchorage, is working with the Anchorage Health Department to ensure adequate public health protections are in place and businesses remain open.

“Most bars and restaurants are already following best practices by maintaining physical distancing, wearing face coverings, using hand sanitizer or frequently washing hands, disinfecting surfaces, and directing staff to stay home if they feel even mild symptoms,” said Silvia Villamides, Executive Director of Alaska Hospitality Retailers. “We truly appreciate that. This virus isn’t going anywhere right now, and it’s not the time to be complacent. For the safety of our community, we need everyone on board with this effort.”

Working with public health experts, this group has developed a list of seven suggested COVID-19 protections for bars and restaurants to reduce the risk to employees and the public:

1. **No admittance without face coverings.**
2. **Reduce or eliminate dancing/bands.** Activities that encourage people to congregate in close proximity to each other all lead to a higher risk of transmission.
3. **Turn down the music.** Loud music, live or otherwise, encourages patrons to stand closer together for conversations, increasing the risk of transmission.
4. **Institute earlier closing hours.** All bars and restaurants will evaluate closing earlier to avoid higher risk hours when patrons are likely less focused on social distancing.

5. **Limiting occupancies.** Maintain and, where possible, increase the physical separation between patrons at the bar and/or tables. Ensure that public spaces like hallways or paths provide the same physical separation. Consider limiting the number of bathroom occupants at any one time.
6. **Signage/advertising.** Set clear expectations for patrons before they visit/enter an establishment.
7. **Increase outdoor seating and serving.** The Alcohol Marijuana Control Board (AMCO) created the AB-15 permit that allows bars and restaurants to temporarily expand their licensed areas to outside and increase physical distancing.

“We take care of our neighbors in Alaska,” said Bill Popp, president and CEO of Anchorage Economic Development Corporation (AEDC). “Right now, taking care of your neighbors looks like wearing a mask, washing your hands, and continuing to keep a safe distance from anyone outside of your household. We’re hopeful businesses can remain open through this stage of the pandemic, but that will require all of us to prioritize the health and safety of employees and the public.”

For businesses looking for resources to promote healthy best practices, AEDC has been working with the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services to develop an Alaska-themed “COVID-Conscious” business toolkit, which includes signage regarding face coverings and physical distancing, hand hygiene instruction, and more. These materials are being translated in partnership with the Municipality’s COVID-19 Response Language Access Task Force. Access the toolkit [here](#).

#### **About AEDC**

AEDC is a private nonprofit corporation, operating since 1987. It exists to encourage growth and diversity in the Anchorage economy, promote a favorable business climate and improve the standard of living of Anchorage residents.

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